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ABSTRACT

Adult education in Sweden is closely interrelated with the prevailing ideology in that society. The predominant ideology in Sweden consists of firm and active commitment to lifelong learning, achieving the 'learned society', socioeconomic and political democracy, full employment, individual growth and dignity, and overall egalitarianism. Welfare, which includes the provision of lifelong education for all, is the ideological foundation of the Swedish sociocultural system. The relatively small, homogeneous, affluent, and value-consistent Swedish society makes the realization of such social principles a reality. About 18% of the national budget is allocated to education; 10% of that is earmarked for adult education. More than half of Swedish adults are engaged in some form of adult education program. These programs may be (1) Study Circles offered by voluntary educational associations, (2) municipal and state-run schools for adults, (3) Folk High Schools (or people's colleges, imparting general civic knowledge), (4) labor market training, (5) on-the-job training offered by national and local governments and private companies in collaboration with their employees, (6) training programs of the trade union confederations, and (7) courses offered on radio, television, and through correspondence schools. (Author/SH)

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IDEOLOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION IN SWEDEN: LESSON FOR THE U. S.

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Theoretical Framework

The educational system in any society is linked closely with its sociocultural milieu. The educational system is also in many ways a microcosm of the sociocultural system. The two are interrelated in structure, function, and form. Education depends on society for its raw material (all the input elements) and society needs education for self-preservation and renewal. The more complex the society, the more pronounced and prolonged this reciprocity is. Social scientists and educators such as Waller (1932), Weber -(1946), and Dewey (1944) have recognized this organismic relationship between school and society. So have the states. (Cohen, 1971) Durkheim (1956) states that since education is essentially a social function, the state cannot remain neutral. Contemporary observers such as Freire (1972) assert that there is no neutral education. Jules Henry (1963) equates the educational system in a society with the heart and blood of a living organism. Thus, one way to understand a sociocultural system is to examine its educational (formal and non-formal) system.

Background of Adult Education in Sweden

Adult education in Sweden is based on the social philosophy and on the ideology of the Social Democratic Party. One way to understand Sweden is to understand the history, philosophy, and mission of the Social Democratic Party, which has been in power since 1935. The party program states:

> "The aim of the Social Democratic Party is the establishment of a social order in which democracy is an essential feature of all institutions and the basis of human relations. Under such a system, the individual will have the opportunity to live a full and meaningful life. To this end, the Social Democratic Party will transform society in such a way that the community as a whole has the right to determine production and the distribution of the product; that the citizens are freed from dependency on all types of power groups outside their control; and that, in the place of a society based upon class distinctions, a community is established whose members cooperate as free and equal people.

> This Socialist view of society expresses the will to realize the ideas of freedom and equality, co-operation and fellowship. These ideas, which are the heritage of former cultural traditions, and which have been remoulded again and again by new experiences, have constantly inspired efforts towards securing a freer and fuller life for mankind. Social Democratic ideas have their deepest roots in the belief in the integrity and basic equality of all human beings."

Concerning education, Article VIII of the Party's program states:

> Besides imparting knowledge, education will aim at developing independence of outlook, ability to co-operate and a democratic spirit.
> No school fees.
> A general comprehensive school.
> Equal status for practical and theoretical training.
> Vocational education available for all at school and at work.
> Development of higher education in accordance with the needs of an advancing society.
> Encouragement of further education.
> Removal of economic obstacles to education and training.
> Promotion of educational experiment.
> Impartial instruction on political and religious beliefs.

The Party's (the country's) economic policy centers on full employment, rapid economic growth, and uniform distribution of income in a balanced and steady economy. In the Swedish mind there is a close relationship between education, the economy, and the economic wellbeing of the individual. The country is very aware of the central role of continuing education in national life. The National Swedish Board of Education (1974) states:

> "Times change. Swedish society like the rest of the world is characterized by a continuous and accelerating process of transformation. The school cannot exist in an ivory tower of its own. Instead it must teach pupils to adjust to the changes that are taking place, e.g., in the labour market and in the field of education itself. The young people who attend school today are the citizens of tomorrow. This means that the school system should not only move with the times but keep one step ahead of them."

The above articles underline the central role of (adult) education in Sweden and the country's commitment to it. Thus education's central task is the democratic development of society and the individual. It is an education where the effect of residence, race, age, and socioeconomic status is to be minimal. More importantly, this reflects a radically egalitarian educational philosophy where academic intelligence alone is no longer to be considered of central importance. The emphasis has been changed from "the communication of limited knowledge to character building". Further aims of Swedish education include the encouragement of continuing education for the 16 year olds and older. This is accomplished through allowances, making education available to the underclasses, broadening university attendance, the decentralization of educational administration, the elimination of invidious distinction between the theoretical (academic) and practical (vocational) studies, doing away with sexism, modernizing teaching methods, moving from didactic teaching to problem-solving learning, and helping the students to understand the functioning of democracy. (Tomasson, 1970).

Organic principles prevail in Swedish adult education and society at large. Various elements in society consider lifelong education necessary for individual and societal wellbeing. Commitment to quality lifelong education as a means of perfecting the individual and society is reflected in legislation, allocation of resources, and an active cultural policy. A major aspect of this cultural policy is the extension and more effective distribution of culture in society. Social philosophy and political ideology in Sweden entail some of the following features: humanism, democracy, empiricism, legalism, functionality of knowledge, freedom and privacy, equality, self-actualization through socially-oriented pursuits, cooperation, enlightenment, harmony, overall individual and social welfare, and egalitarianism. Many societies, of course, indicate theoretical commitment to such ideals. In the case of Sweden, however, such commitment is translated into implementation. There are very few inconsistencies between the ideal and the manifestation. Sweden is a more harmonious and integrated society.

The "educational explosion" of the 1960's generated rising expectations for education, expanded educational opportunities, and, to a certain extent, widened the gap between the overly educated youth and the undereducated old. Furthermore, the manpower approach to education brought pressure on the educational authorities to offer specific skills beyond the comprehensive school. On top of all this the Swedes are lifelong learners and study throughout their lives. They consider retraining and continuous learning essential for survival in

today's world. In this respect Sweden ranks the highest in Europe. The average adult reads more books than the average college student in the United States.

Forms of Adult Education

Since 1968, adult education programs have been carried out by Sweden's 475 municipalities. These programs may take any one of the following forms:

1. Study Circles offered by voluntary educational associations;
2. Municipal and State-run schools for adults;
3. Folk High Schools of various types;
4. Labour market training;
5. On-the-job training offered by national and local governments and private companies in collaboration with their employees;
6. The training programs of the trade union confederations and their affiliated national unions;
7. Courses offered on radio, television, and through correspondence schools.

All of these programs receive some subsidies from the national government. The aim of adult education is to provide to older people who received little formal education in their youth - perhaps only six or seven years of primary schooling - the opportunity to raise their level of general knowledge to that of today's young people, who have access to at least nine or more years of schooling. There are about five million people between the ages of twenty and twenty-five in Sweden.

> "It should give the individual a chance to receive vocational training, advanced training and retraining to meet the changing demands of the labor market. It should give each person a continually improving basis for participation in the political, social and cultural life of his country. Adult education must be made available in form and under economic conditions that allow everyone to participate, regardless of working hours, family status, or place of residence." (Swedish Institute, 1974, page 1.)

Study Circles

The largest number of adults receive adult education through the Study Circles. A Study Circle is defined as "an informal group which meets for the common pursuit of well-planned studies of a subject or a problem area which has previously been decided upon." Study Circles are organized by the local branches of the Swedish Educational Associations. There are about 200,000 Study Circles operating at any one time serving some two million participants. The Workers' Educational

Association (ABF) is the largest sponsor - it organizes about one-third of the study circles.

In a Study Circle the group itself, ranging from 5 to 20 adults, decides what to study and how. The leader offers organizing and administrative advice, nothing else. There are no formal requirements for leadership, although the Linkoping Teacher Training College offers training in this area. To get government subsidy, a group must have between 5 and 20 members and meet for at least 20 hours over a four-week period. State subsidies cover 50% of the cost; the rest comes from the municipalities and tuition.

Three areas are very popular with study circle participants. They include the arts, languages, and civics. Study Circles in Swedish, English, Mathematics, and the natural sciences of grades 7-9 are given a high priority by the authorities and account for one-third of the study circles. This is intended to bridge the educational gap between the young and the old, upgrade the educational attainment of the old, the low-income, the immigrants, and women, and to enable these to continue their education. There are Study Circles at the university level, too.

Training and education in the form of in and pre-service training is conducted by government agencies, organizations, and unions. As a rule, the government trains its own employees. County hospitals and other health care agencies train their own medium and lower level staff. The municipalities and county authorities have skilled and extensive training staff of their own. Even some of the elected officials benefit from such training. Most large private companies have training departments and programs. Employer and employee organizations, and/or a combination thereof, conduct training programs for their members. For example, they train industrial safety workers and members of work councils. As a rule, the employer pays the cost of such training.

Sweden's two largest employee organizations - the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Central Organization of Salaried Employees (TCO) have extensive study programs of their own. These study programs have several aims. They are designed to give the members solid background in union and other socio-political and economic matters. They also train union officials for the local, regional, and national levels. The courses range from one week to six months; and these, too, are subsidized by the government.

Folk High Schools

The oldest and best known adult education institutions are known as folkhogskolay (folk high schools or people's colleges.) They were founded in 1868 by N. F. S. Grundtvig (Gage, 1975),

a well-known Danish philosopher, poet and theologian who envisaged the school along Paul Goodman's concept of "the community of scholars". He stressed "fellowship", called his school "school for life", wanted to "awaken" rather than teach knowledge, and he believed that "the living word", not the book, was the end and means in education.

Folk high schools grew stronger with the development of various social movements. The movements needed leaders and educated members. The initial goals were to provide further education to the rural population and the urban poor; to offer broad civic education to anyone who wanted it; and to inculcate in people a sense of active social responsibility. Currently, however, the goals and function of the Folk High Schools have been modified. The goal of the Folk High School is "to impart general civic education, the work particularly aiming at making the student realize his responsibility as a man and as a member of society. It should be so performed that it strengthens the student's will for cooperation, improves his power of independent thinking and of discerning judgment, and furthers his maturity and his interest in learning." (Fleisher, 1968, p.24).

In the Folk High Schools overall social-personal growth is considered more important than vocational training. However, they do prepare people for admission to vocational schools, colleges and universities. The schools aim at serving urban industrial workers as well. Society considers an enlightened labor force necessary for democracy. Integration, praxis, dialogue, and democracy are the underlying foundations of the folk high schools. Such concepts are the basis for every facet of daily life in the school. Most activities are student centered. Academic work is geared toward individual need, interest, and capability. The emphasis is on individual competence, not massified ritual of going through school. The Folk High School performs several major functions today. They are a unique and a specialized educational opportunity for the handicapped, senior citizens, droupouts, and inmates. They serve as half-way homes for the socially maladjusted. Since most schools are residential they foster communal living, solidarity, cooperation, mutual feedback and support. Most teachers also live in or adjacent to the schools. Most folk high schools are truly models of self-contained participatory democracy and egalitarianism. Power and decision making are shared by all. There are no exams, grades or subjective evaluation. About four percent of the student population consists of the socially maladjusted. They include drug addicts, alcoholics, former inmates and so on. The schools consider accepting such students as part of their function in society and as a challenge as well as an opportunity.

Folk High Schools reflect and practice modernistic educational-social philosophy. They are committed to the overall cognitive, personal, social and ideological development of the students.

Every effort is made to combine theory with practice and to implement what is taught and preached. Emphasis is placed on enlightened and intellectualized experience. Most, if not all, learning is initiated, executed, and evaluated by the learner. There is no formal examination, grading, or evaluation by the teachers. Students receive a certificate of attendance, competence, and comments on how well they learn, not what and how much they have learned. Students may, however, receive a grade on a scale of 1-4 if they ask for it. The comments also talk about the overall language development, commitment, and interpersonal growth of the student.

There are 108 Folk High Schools and ten related branches throughout Sweden. Half of the Folk High Schools are controlled by the County Councils, nine by the labour movement, four by the Temperance Board, several by the church and Scout Association, two by the physical education organizations, and one by the Finnish immigrants. Different schools stress different and related fields of study. The folk high schools have traditionally enjoyed a very high prestige. Some very important people are products of these schools. For instance, the current Minister of Finance and two other cabinet members are folk high school graduates. At one point one-third of the Parliament consisted of Folk High School graduates. Additionally, many poets, writers, and civil servants have gone to Folk High Schools.

Two types of courses are offered, long-term winter courses lasting 30-34 weeks and short-term special courses lasting from 1-8 weeks. The long term courses are for two years and occasionally for three years, two terms per year. The curriculum varies greatly. Most of the long term courses in most schools consist of the secondary school curriculum. The students, teachers, and the administration in each school and/or course decides upon its own curriculum. Furthermore, there is considerable individualization in instruction. The courses range from racism in South Africa to communication, fine arts, education, the natural sciences, leadership training for study circles to the study of Rome. One may also take a cluster of courses in the same area of interest. Special courses for the elderly and handicapped, as well as various social science courses, predominate the short term courses. Long and short term courses may also be conducted simultaneously.

Roughly some 13,000 students enroll in the long term winter courses and some 45,000 in the short term special subject courses every year. The minimum age limit is 18; there is no upper limit. (National Swedish Board of Education, 1975.)

There is no tuition at folk high schools, but students living at the school pay 250-600 Swedish crowns ($70-$900) for room and board. Teachers usually have a college degree in an academic discipline. The university of Linkoping specializes in training Folk High School teachers. Students who are 20 and older, just like all students in Sweden, receive 9000 Swedish crowns per

year in grants and loans from the central government; the grant must be repaid after graduation. The student pays 350 Swedish crowns per month to the school. But those who are under 20 receive 200 crowns per month from the government and pay 150 crowns to the school.

Folk High Schools both attract and produce highly politicized students and teachers. They attract radical elements who feel uncomfortable in the regular public schools. This radicalizing effect is the legacy of the traditional and historical role and function of the folk high schools. Historically they have served the underclass, political leaders, youth movement leaders, activists, and civic-minded individuals. The majority of today's teachers come from Class II (the middle class); they are young, socialists, communists, radicals, activists, and people-oriented. Most of them are now trained at the Linkoping Teacher Training College. Linkoping combines theory with practice; it puts high premium on solidarity, problem-solving, democracy, experiential learning, and the creation of a truly socialist Sweden. Folk High School teachers communicate their ideology to their students and associates in direct and subtle ways. Some schools like the Brunswick school, owned by the labor movement, are known as centers for extreme communists and activists. Illich, Marx, Freire and Jonson Myrdal constitute favorite thinkers among folk high school people. Leftist elements seek refuge and identity in and use the Folk High Schools as a basis for launching their ideology. Some of these leftists are pushing for modeling the schools after the Chinese communes and/or the Israel Kibbutzim. There is considerable friction within the schools as well. Leftists and activists are pressing for total self-government of the schools by the students, where they can control the funding, hiring, firing, curriculum, and so on. There is continued conflict between the leftist-activists and the conservatives.

Different Folk High Schools specialize in different concentrations. Some train union leaders. Others work with maladjusted people; others are purely academic. The Asa school collaborates with Dagoholm, a nearby center for the treatment of alcoholics. Ola Anttila, a patient, points out "I think this is an important part of the therapy. Going to school makes you less tongue-tied. It breaks your isolation and builds your self-confidence. Besides, with a Folk High School course behind me, I think it will be easier to land a job after I leave this place." (Arlemalm, 1974, page 5). Harold Vallgarda, the headmaster, says that "every single institution ought to have opportunities for learning. Many who come to the alcoholic treatment center are academically gifted, but they have never had a chance to get an education." (ibid. page 5.) Vaddo Folk High School near Stockholm runs a

program for the Norrtalje prison. One inmate says, "The difference between school and incarceration is the difference between day and night. Ordinarily, the whole world of the mind is cooped up in a tiny cell; here the mind has room to expand the whole time." (ibid, page 5.) Some schools specialize in special education. Even the school plant is designed, built, and equipped for this purpose. For instance, the Furuboda school for the handicapped, sponsored by the Freewill Baptists in southern Sweden, is one such school. The 100 students range in age from 17-32 and are severely handicapped. Follow up studies show that Furuboda graduates or transfers do quite well in life or in other Folk High Schools. In 1972-73, 52 psychiatric patients completed the two years of Folk High School.

Parent Education

The Swedes believe in prenatal education for the parents. Although "maternity groups" have existed for the last twenty years, efforts to systematize "parent education" are recent. The "Provision For Children Group" recommended such training in 1973 and The Commission on Child Centers and The Commission on Foster Homes have reinforced early recommendations. It is recommended that parent education should be offered in schools, in the army, in the hospitals, and wherever possible and appropriate. Some 33 of the 475 municipalities provide such training. And the domestic science course in schools touches on the subject. It is said that single, young, "needy", first time parents and immigrants, should be given priority in parent education programs.

Parent training is in response to the needs of and interest by the parents and authorities dealing with children. It is also intended to prevent and curb child abuse and juvenile delinquency. The majority of those who participate are in favor. One study showed that 80% of the participants found it very valuable.

Training deals with all and every aspect of child-rearing. Subjects dealt with include sex roles, authoritarian vs. democratic socialization, children's needs, mother's needs, the child's cognitive apparatus, language development and so on. There is talk about making parent training compulsory or at least reaching everyone through the media. However, some educators and observers are against compulsory parent education.

Anna Torbiornsson, a well known commentator, rejects compulsory parent training and she advocates that parents should be given opportunity to work from and on their own problems and experiences. She sees this as a tool for parental problem solving as well. She says that training should be initiated by parents and largely conducted by them with professional guidance, and that it should not be thrust on them by authorities in a school-like fashion. Anna says that training alone won't do, but that it must be linked to creative, less stressful conditions, a shorter work week, and overall structural changes. It is recommended that parents must be given leave of absence to take part in the training. (Anderfelt, 1975)

Broadcast Education

There are adult education programs through radio, television, and correspondence courses. A special Committee for Television and Radio Education (TRU) designs educational programs that meet the needs of learners in adult, secondary and higher education. Foreign language courses dominate. There is close coordination between TRU and correspondence schools, municipal adult schools and libraries. The Hermods correspondence school designs programs which help people fulfill formal educational requirements at the basic, secondary, and/or higher education levels. But the Brevskolan designs courses that primarily meet special interest needs. This TRU unit has been in existence since 1967. It costs 60 million Swedish crowns per year.

Complete high school programs are designed and broadcast for labour market training too. At the higher education level broadcasting started in the social sciences since there was a shortage of faculty in this area. Business economics and political economy have received particular attention. Other programs are vocationally oriented since there is a shortage of both faculty and equipment. Courses in defense and disaster are taught as well. Other courses have included educational technology, labour market technique and personnel administration, internationalization of teaching, dissection guidance in the anatomy of the central nervous system, algebra, automatic control, physics and so on.

TRU produces diploma, vocational, and general education programs for adults. A main goal is to achieve rationalization, efficiency, and popularization through the media. On the air education coincided with and helped the reforms in the formal school system as well as the needs in the country and the educational system. One problem in the regular educational

system was teacher shortage. On-the-air education has met this need, expanded opportunities to more people, and has freed scarce human resources for improving the quality of education and experimentation, material development and so on. Short term courses, material and curriculum development and two-shift teaching, have been by-products of educational broadcasting. This multi-media approach to adult education has proved more effective than the traditional approach to schooling (TRU Committee). TRU programs have brought about individualization, student-centered and exploratory types of teaching-learning. It has changed the teacher's function and the role-relationship in education. The teacher now serves as a guide, motivator, and feedback system. The TRU has brought the university system, the media, the industry producing audio and video material, the publishers, the local government, and the Ministry of Education into close and active cooperation.

About 250,000 to 600,000 persons watch these programs. Between 1968 and 1972 some 873,000 program copies were sold, and some 56,000 circle members and 17,000 Folk High School students used the TRU materials. And 52,000 correspondence courses were sold during the same period.

Study Circles, Folk High Schools, and municipal programs are under the supervision of the National Board of Education (SO). The Board ensures that guidelines established by the Cabinet and the Parliament are followed. The Board trains the teachers, provides research funds and other services. The labour market training is conducted jointly by the Labour Market Board and the National Board of Education.

Education from first grade through the University is free and it is financed by the government. The government feels that adults should also be entitled to their share of free education. Adult education in all cases is almost entirely free. In the case of Study Circles, the participants pay very small fees. The government spends about 18% of the national budget on education and 10% of its educational budget on adult education, and more than half of that is spent on labour market training. Local municipal governments cover about one-third of adult education costs. The remainder of the costs are provided by political parties, labour, and private companies. All political parties are in agreement on adult education. In 1974-75, 1000 million Swedish Crowns were spent on labour market training.

Every effort is made to recruit needy adults into adult education programs. The largest group consists of older people who have only six or seven years of formal school. Such people are usually recruited at their places of employment. Special

efforts are expended in rural areas. There are fewer requirements for obtaining government subsidies in rural areas. Attempts are also made to reach the handicapped. In 1974 two commissions on adult education made several recommendations for adult education. Anyone who has worked for five years is fully compensated for loss of income during enrollment in adult education. The commission also recommended all kinds of aid and loans to participants. It further suggests that all study circles be completely free of charge. Special priority is given to older people, housewives, inmates, immigrants, and the rural population.

Adult education is likely to receive even greater attention in the future. "...we have increasingly come to realize the need to make education a lifelong process for everyone, and education in this sense refers not only to vocational skills, but also to liberal education and character development. The work of democratic school reform is going ahead in this spirit." (Profile of Sweden, page 109). The realization of lifelong education is based on the ethical system which makes Sweden "the conscience of the world."

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